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The President's Daily Brief

June 9, 1976

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

June 9, 1976

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LEBANON: *The Arab League foreign ministers, who gathered in Cairo late last night to consider the Lebanese crisis, adopted a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire and the replacement of Syrian troops in Lebanon with an Arab security force. Late press reports from Beirut say Syrian President Asad has accepted the resolution.*

The resolution appears to be a compromise between advocates of a Palestinian call for an immediate, unconditional withdrawal of Syrian forces and those hoping to avoid a direct challenge to Damascus. The resolution describes the joint Arab force as a "token" security force and gives no timetable for the replacement of Syrian troops.

The resolution also authorizes a committee composed of the Arab League Secretary General and representatives of Algeria, Libya, and Bahrain to go immediately to Beirut to "cooperate" with "all concerned parties" in arranging the cease-fire.

Although the resolution expresses support for the Palestinian revolution and determination to protect it from "all dangers," it carefully avoids direct criticism of Syria's actions in Lebanon and any suggestion that the Arab League is dictating to Damascus.

The speedy action by the foreign ministers clearly caught Damascus off guard. According to reporting early yesterday, Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam was planning to arrive in Cairo today to counter Palestinian charges. Syria's representative at the session yesterday warned that Syria would not accept any resolution until Khaddam "had been heard."

We have no confirmation from Damascus that President Asad has, in fact, accepted all provisions of the resolution--as the Beirut press alleges. We would expect any Syrian endorsement to be qualified to reflect Syria's adamant opposition to the introduction of other Arab troops in Lebanon.

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Asad, however, may have accepted the League's call for a truce in order to avoid total defiance of a joint Arab decision. The Syrians, moreover, have run into unexpected, stiff opposition in Lebanon and may even welcome a respite.

Late yesterday, elements of the Syrian armored division on the Beirut to Damascus highway reportedly had moved to within a few miles of the leftist stronghold of Alayh, Kamal Jumblatt's home town.

Other Syrian forces were unsuccessful in their attempt to enter the southern port city of Sidon. Heavy shelling was still going on there late last night, and the Palestinians fear a renewed Syrian assault today.

Fighting elsewhere was at a low level. In the north, Syrian-controlled Saiqa forces in Tripoli suffered a sharp setback--as they have in other major Lebanese cities. Syrian regulars, however, expanded their control in the surrounding countryside.

Syrian and Israeli aircraft flew reconnaissance missions over Lebanon again yesterday, but there were no incidents. It is still not clear whether any Syrian aircraft have been used in combat missions against leftist and Palestinian targets.

Syria's military escalation in Lebanon has thrown into even sharper relief President Asad's high personal stake in achieving a solution to the Lebanese crisis.

The domestic returns from Asad's military moves are not yet in, but there are rumors of sharp divisions within the regime. There are no indications that Asad faces an imminent coup.

The urgency in Asad's present situation apparently was brought on by a miscalculation of Palestinian willingness to resist increased Syrian intervention. Thus far, Syrian regulars have not fared as well as Asad expected against the Palestinians.

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Given the outside Arab pressures that are building on Asad, it seems unlikely that he will be willing to sustain military action against the Palestinians much longer. On the other hand, it would be difficult for him to respond to Palestinian pressures for a substantial withdrawal of Syrian forces.

The latest US embassy assessment sees Asad as continuing in firm control. The absence of an Israeli response to the heightened Syrian intervention in Lebanon may have substantially reduced the criticism of Asad from within the all-important military.

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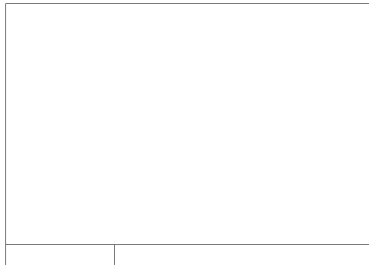
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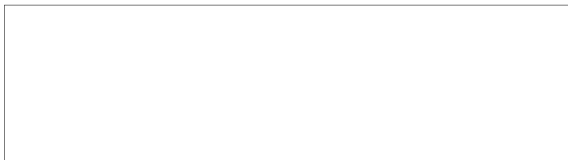
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USSR: *The Soviet leadership and media have re-emphasized interest in the early conclusion of a new strategic arms limitations agreement since the signing last month of the US-Soviet treaty on peaceful nuclear explosions.*

The USSR has played up the symbolic significance of the new agreement for US-Soviet relations in general and for SALT in particular. Following General Secretary Brezhnev's affirmation of Moscow's intention to seek a new strategic arms pact at the signing ceremony on May 28, various Soviet spokesmen have asserted that the peaceful nuclear explosions treaty provides a stimulus to agreements on "other disarmament question." An article carried by *Pravda* last week exhorted the US to move "as soon as possible" toward a new SALT agreement.

The USSR's increased public attention to SALT apparently derives from its hopeful readings of developments in the US rather than from any substantial change in the Soviet negotiating position. The Soviets have been encouraged by your success in recent presidential primaries in the face of attacks on US policy toward the USSR. They were also pleased by your reaffirmation last month of a continuing commitment to SALT, and reported your Los Angeles statement in the central press.

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Moscow probably still remains skeptical of the chances for achieving a new SALT agreement this year.

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There has been no indication that the Soviets are willing to modify their negotiating stance. *Pravda* and other sources continue to criticize the US along familiar lines, specifically attacking the B-1, Trident, and long-range cruise missile programs.

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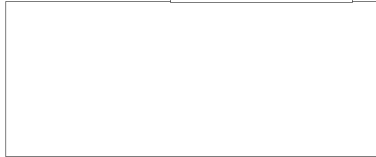
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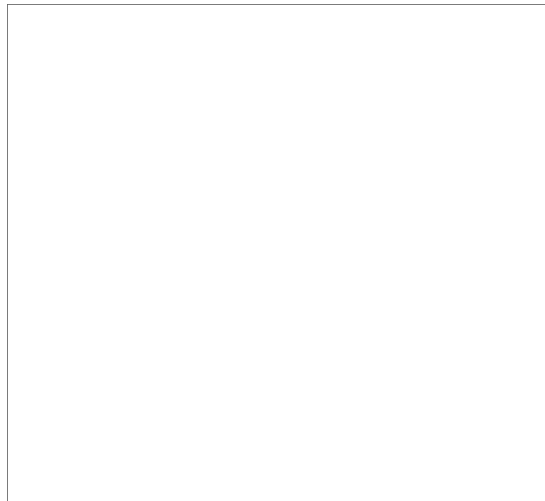
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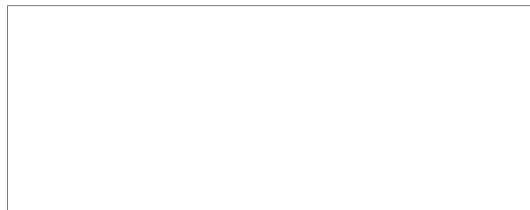
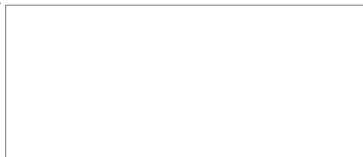
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NOTES

The Cuban convoy in the Caribbean has changed course and is scheduled to arrive in Mariel, Cuba's main military port, later today.

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It may be bringing home the first sizable contingent of Cuban troops withdrawn from Angola. If so, its arrival would give Prime Minister Castro an opportunity to reiterate his pledge to withdraw.

All Angolan troops in Luanda were ordered confined to barracks yesterday for two days. Staff headquarters explained that a pending reorganization of the armed forces and preparations for Armed Forces Day were behind the move.

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Since Armed Forces Day is almost two months away, the order is more likely related to the factional dispute within the Popular Movement and may be part of a power play by the military against the political wing of the Popular Movement. Last month the general staff surfaced a plan to reorganize the military that President Neto rescinded the following day, stating that it had been issued without his sanction. Neto may actually have been thwarting an attempt by the military leadership to increase its influence.

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The Greek government has declared that it will continue to allow port visits by ships of the US Sixth Fleet despite recent demonstrations and parliamentary criticism directed against them.

Greek security police clashed last month with leftist demonstrators on both Rhodes and Mykonos, which caused the government to ask that US ships depart in order to avoid more serious violence.

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A limited schedule of port visits by US ships has been resumed, including one to a port near Athens last week that was carried out without incident.

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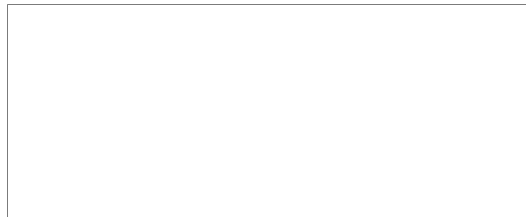
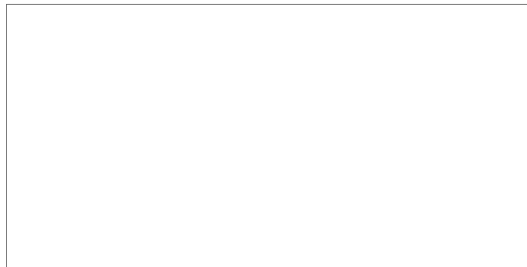
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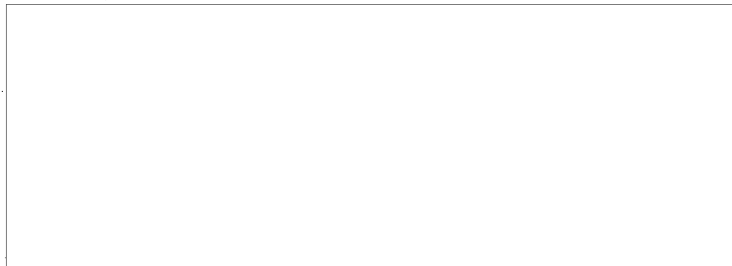
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